

cause of higher social and psychological demands on them creates parameters on the conclusions that can be drawn from these studies. Ethical limitations exist on what games can be used in studies with different age groups.

The final discussion in this section identifies a popular compromise in the debate that suggests certain groups are more vulnerable than others. However, few studies of vulnerable groups were conducted at the time of this report's release. Earlier studies suggested personality variables do exist with certain types of computer games, but it was not certain whether the differences exist because games affect these personalities more strongly or not.

The authors conclude their report with key problems with the Active Media perspective. These are: laboratory settings cannot reproduce the true game phenomenon they are studying; the majority of studies assume they will find negative results; causality cannot be established because there are too many variables to be considered; though all computer games are treated as being the same, they cannot be considered 'essentially similar' so that generalisations cannot really be made; and games used in older studies are significantly less realistic than those which exist today, making conclusions suspect.

They note that general criticism considers the focus of Active Media research wrong and that a more fruitful direction would be to focus on to what extent meaningful relationships with computer games can be established. It is also considered out of step with current developmental psychology. Ultimately questions are raised about its ability to say anything valuable about the potential danger of computer games.

It is sometimes difficult to tell which are the author's thoughts and criticisms and which come from the research they are analysing. Overall, however, the report provides a comprehensive overview of research conducted until 2004. It is a fine source of information for researchers interested in the studies that substantiate much of the commentary in the media made by noted educational and psychology groups that support the view that violence in video games has a negative influence on young people, and the questionability of these studies.

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Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds)

Promote or Protect: Perspectives on Media Literacy and Media Regulations

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom,

Göteborg University, Sweden, Yearbook 2003, 260pp

Cecilia von Feilitzen and Ulla Carlsson's edited book is a classic treatise on the subject of protecting the young and impressionable from the catastrophic onslaught of the media, which intensified following worldwide liberalisation and deregulation, pumping the information highways with highly spurious and injurious news and views.

Beginning with Ulla Carlsson's foreword, which clearly delineates the objectives and the basic questions discussed in the book, there are 21 articles which deal with specific issues and case studies – region- and country-wise – of far-reaching importance and implications. The book is divided into three segments, namely 'Media education, media literacy and awareness-raising', 'The media: Self-regulation, co-regulation, regulation?' and 'Protect or promote?' Each part consists of a number of chapters which meander through the increasing mediated violence accessible on the internet and TV and consider the role of parents, teachers and social workers, besides other stakeholders such as media operators and governments. The chapters also deal with European, Asian and African experiences in addition to documenting interesting case studies in the US.

In her foreword, Ulla Carlsson seeks to make a forceful argument as to what is missing in the media literacy on a global scenario by stating as follows:

For a number of years now, there has been widespread discussion of how laws and self-regulation may be applied to limit the dissemination of 'injurious' media content. In recent years, however, the emphasis has shifted somewhat from legislation and prohibition toward an emphasis on the responsibility of adults – adults within the media, in the schools and in the home. And there is a growing emphasis on the importance of media literacy. Consequently, 'protection' no longer is viewed exclusively in terms of keeping children away from certain content, or vice versa, but is also a question of strengthening children in their role as consumers of the media. 'Media literacy' means having an understanding of how mass media work, how they produce meaning, how the media are organised and knowing how to use them wisely. (p.8)

In her introductory note, Cecilia von Feilitzen notes that increasing medialisation has generated an intense debate about the importance of *media literacy*, i.e. ways to promote the media competence of children and young people in the form of media education and participation, as well as through increasing media awareness among parents, teachers, media professionals, politicians, voluntary organisation and other adults. At the same time, she adds that media regulations in this context are primarily measures of protecting the young (and adults) from potential harmful content by means of laws, age limits, ratings/classifications, filtering, time schedules, watersheds, warning, labelling, and codes of media conducts. But, according to von Feilitzen, media regulations also include efforts to improve the young's media environment, for example by offering media content of high quality and diversity (p.10).

In the chapter 'Media regulation, self-regulation and education', Divina Frau-Meigs dwells at length on the conflicting laws and rules at work in Europe to promote regulation, self-regulation and deregulation of the media. She also points out how outdated family patterns, an opaque audiovisual sector and the controversial definition of violence have influenced the content of media in the last decade, and highlights how self-regulation had performed a paradoxical role. For instance, she writes that the logic of self-regulation does not question the sources of production prior to program-

ming; it thrusts the burden of choice *a posteriori* onto the unwitting viewers (p.25). Though this premise appears to be good on the surface, the truth is that nearly two-thirds of children are also watching TV programs in their absence. She also cites the differences between American and French researchers on their assessment of the impact of violence on TV, the former tending to use quantitative techniques while the latter believe in qualitative research. Frau-Meigs also points out how the state, which is supposed to regulate, fosters the role of deregulator in the name of self-regulation.

David Buckingham and Kate Domaille have presented the findings of the UNESCO survey conducted against three important parameters: Media Education in Schools; Partnerships; and the Development of Media Education. The study found that there is little evidence internationally of systematic or extensive media education provision for younger children, though countries like Hungary and New Zealand are riding the crest of a media education wave (p.43). The authors also point out that there is considerable confusion on whether or not to include media education as a curriculum subject. The study identified the need for sustained, in-depth teacher training, both at initial and in-service levels.

In the chapter 'Managing without a mandate', Joanne M. Lisosky presents a picture of media education in the US, which has never enjoyed support by the US federal government. However, the study illustrates how the private and non-governmental sectors have taken a keen interest in media literacy and education for children, citing the New Mexico Media Literacy project, which purports to be the largest and most successful independent activist media literacy project in the US and was founded by veteran newscaster Hugh Downs in 1993 (p.56). The study also observes how a curriculum in media literacy in Washington has been developed at the school level to combat media violence (p.59). Most importantly, concerning the effects of violence on the small screen, the US senate report prepared in 1998 identified 'mediated violence as a primary cause of the escalation of youth violence' (Children, Violence and the Media 1999).

In 'Media literacy and image education – a European approach', Matteo Zacchetti expresses concern over state failure in Europe to empower citizens in the effective use of internet applications. The chapter discusses the distinction between media literacy and digital literacy, and adds that appropriate funding for projects that help achieve citizen empowerment is essential (p.68). While Midorai F. Suzuki and Kyoko Takahashi, in their chapter on Japan, highlight how the murder of an 11 year old by a 14-year-old boy in Kobe sparked a wave of discussion on juvenile violence across Japan, they stop short of suggesting any harsh legislation against media violence on television.

Thomas Tufte deals with three generations of entertainment education on television and digital media, citing the Soul City 'edutainment' model developed by Garth Japhet and looking in particular at the pedagogy beyond marketing for developing media literacy to combat HIV/AIDS (p.93). He writes that 'concerns about the citizen-

ship and human rights are at the core of this matter, and when it comes to the use of radio and TV drama in EE strategies, it is also about exercising and recognising the *cultural citizenship* of the audiences' (p.95).

Karin Larsson's chapter, 'Children's on-line life – and what parents believe: A survey in five countries', offers an interesting analysis of how children approach online content and what parents think their children are doing on the internet. The study was based on a Safety, Awareness, Facts and Tools (SAFT) project conducted in five countries – Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. The study shares with the other contributions to this book the concern that parents are not aware of what their children are doing, and most importantly that parents often do not realise their children are actually browsing pornography. Only 24% of parents have this concern and knowledge while approximately 44% of children somehow gain access to pornography (p.117). Mediated violence and access to sex-related sites has steadily increased in India, which is reflected in a corresponding rise in crime against women and children.

While the book discusses how the strategies of regulation, self-regulation and co-regulation might be considered hypocritical in Europe, W. James Potter presents more authentic data gathered in his survey of US homes watching TV. He unequivocally debunks the idea of such concepts as a 'safe harbour' or 'prime time' where children still have access to adult programs. He also highlights the problems involved in using the V-chip (Viewer Control Chip or violence chip) and the hypocrisy underlying the programmers' system for rating TV programs (p.197).

The book is an interesting collection of chapters on a wide range of topics about mediated communication, messages and images with an emphasis on violence and pornography. While almost all the authors address the primary concerns of mediated violence and its impact on children, many veer around the myth of regulation, self-regulation and co-regulation, especially as observed in Europe and the US. However, the inclusion of chapters about Asian countries such as Singapore and India, and chapters on Latin America and Africa, brought some divergence to the content, finding that in deciding whether to protect or promote, there is not much difference even among non-European countries.

Overall the book takes us into a number of paradigm shifts in media education and literacy, besides offering an array of new definitions and dimensions since media education emerged as an alternative classroom paradigm through the efforts of UNESCO in 1984. The book in effect argues both for promoting and protecting media literacy. It is therefore an excellent resource for current media researchers and sociologists. It will also help policy-makers in different regions develop appropriate regulatory approaches that are suitable in their respective cultural contexts.

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